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Pattern of conferences

Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In response to resolutions 54/248 and 54/249 of 23 December 1999 which placed greater emphasis on the conference services operations at Nairobi, the administration of the United Nations Office at Nairobi has been restructured. A new Division of Conference Services has been established at Nairobi effective 1 September 2000, as an organizational unit of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Close cooperation within the Department towards the timely creation of a permanent interpretation service at Nairobi and further steps to coordinate the rational use of human and financial resources of the Nairobi office at the Secretariat-wide level for the benefits of the Organization have resulted in improved utilization of conference-servicing facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. In resolution 55/222 of 23 December 2000, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to report on the utilization rates of interpretation services and conference facilities at all duty stations. Pursuant to that request, the present report has been prepared, emphasizing the effect that the above-mentioned developments have had on the conference services at Nairobi and on Nairobi as a venue for United Nations conferences and meetings.

* A/56/50.

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I. Background

1. In response to General Assembly resolutions 54/248 and 54/249 of 23 December 1999, in which the Assembly placed greater emphasis on the conference-servicing operations at Nairobi, the Nairobi Administration was restructured during the biennium 2000-2001. Following the separation of conference services from the Division of Administrative Services, the Division of Conference Services was established at Nairobi, effective 1 September 2000, as an organizational unit of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, operationally reporting to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. The reorganization is reflected in ST/SGB/2000/13. Within the period under review, the Department, in cooperation with the United Nations Office at Nairobi, has taken a number of steps to strengthen the capacity and increase utilization of the conference-servicing facilities at Nairobi.

2. In its resolution 55/222 of 22 December 2000 the General Assembly, noting with satisfaction that the creation of a permanent interpretation service at Nairobi offered great potential for Nairobi as a venue for the United Nations conferences and meetings, took note with appreciation of the efforts made by the United Nations Office at Nairobi to attract more meetings to its facilities. To facilitate further progress in that direction, the General Assembly by the same resolution requested the Secretary-General to revise ST/AI/342 on the guidelines for the host Government agreements falling under resolution 40/243, and to take into account the new administrative arrangements with respect to the United Nations Office at Nairobi. As a result of the subsequent consultations between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the conference-servicing facility of Nairobi is on a good track to becoming organizationally, functionally and budgetarily an integral part of a global system of conference services covering units in all the offices of the Organization.

3. With the successful creation of a permanent interpretation service at Nairobi as of January 2001, in compliance with resolution 54/248 B, the availability of this important facility has already had positive effect on the meetings activities of the United Nations Office at Nairobi. A more pronounced multiplier effect is likely by the end of the current biennium and beyond.

II. Overview

4. The table below reflects the status of implementation of the programme budget for conference services at Nairobi in 2000, the first year of the current biennium. The statistics for the four categories of meetings are close to the planned annual indicator. It should be pointed out that, while the newly created interpretation team at Nairobi, operational as of January 2001, could not have had an effect on meetings statistics for 2000, the trend for 2001 is encouraging. On the other hand, the area of non-calendar meetings shows a dramatic increase, beyond the total planned for the biennium, thanks to the promotional efforts of the United Nations Office at Nairobi among the United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organizations in Nairobi. Annexes I to IV contain detailed listings of the four categories of meetings held in 2000 and in the first six months of 2001. The areas of translation and reproduction also demonstrate good compliance with the goals for the biennium.

The table indicates that the goals set for the biennium, though ambitious, are realistic.

Table
Implementation of the programme budget for 2000-2001: significant workload indicators

Indicator	*Biennium total 2000-2001 (estimated)*	*2000 (actual)*	*Percentage of estimated total for the biennium*
Intergovernmental meetings with interpretation	577	242	41.9
Meetings without interpretation	978	560	57.3
Non-calendar meetings	65	72	110.8
Multilingual meetings with remote translation held outside Nairobi	200	122	61.0
Documents edited and translated into six languages (thousands of words)	20 150	9 892	49.1
Outsourced translation (thousands of words)	4 356	2 536	58.2
Output of printing shop (millions of pages)	115	60	52.2

5. Among the salient features, it is worth mentioning the final negotiating session on the biosafety protocol, held in Montreal in January 2000, and the final negotiating session on the convention on persistent organic pollutants, held in Johannesburg in December 2000, and the diplomatic conference in Stockholm on the latter instrument in May 2001, serviced by the Nairobi team. Among the most significant events is the April 2001 session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination that has greatly benefited from the effective support of the United Nations African office. Three weeks in February 2001 were devoted to the twenty-first session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the eighteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements and the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). They were the first events that benefited from the presence of the in-house team of interpreters in Nairobi, with reduced expenditures as compared with past practice.

III. New developments

6. The creation of the permanent interpretation service in Nairobi has already had an immediate positive effect on the work of the intersessional working bodies of UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the committees of permanent representatives, who since May 2001 have had access to multilingual interpretation. Until the respective decisions of the February sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP and the Commission on Human Settlements are officially approved by the General Assembly, the sessions of the two working bodies are provided with interpretation on as-available basis. Within the months of May and June 2001, all 10 meetings of those working bodies requested and were provided with interpretation (see annex V).

7. At the request of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, the Nairobi team of Chinese interpreters has been dispatched on loan to the United Nations Office at Geneva for the meeting of the Preparatory Committee (July-August) for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in Durban, South Africa. A larger group will participate in the servicing of the Conference itself (August-September).

8. Further avenues for the rational use of shared resources of the Department, inter alia in interpretation, were discussed at the second coordination meeting of conference services managers, held on 2 and 3 July 2001, and the results will be reported in due course.

IV. Conclusions

9. The creation of the permanent interpretation team at Nairobi has already had an invigorating effect on the activities of UNEP and its affiliated conventions, and on Habitat, in the form of more productive intergovernmental consultations. The number of multilingual meetings to be held in Nairobi and with the Nairobi team's participation elsewhere in 2001 and 2002 is increasing. The calendar of conferences for February 2001 demonstrates the cost-saving effect of the team in Nairobi for the regular budget in terms of temporary assistance. The Nairobi team becomes a regular feature at United Nations conferences in Africa and elsewhere, with its political and cost-efficiency effects.

10. The creation of the Division of Conference Services and its inclusion in the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services is another logical and welcome step towards wider geographical coverage of the activities of the Organization and more rational use of the human and financial resources of the Secretariat. Future reports in this series will concentrate on further positive results of the above initiatives for the Organization.

Annex I

A. Major meetings with interpretation serviced in Nairobi

January to December 2000

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/ROA	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment on Forests	E,F — 24-27 January
UNEP/ROA	African Regional Consultations on the World Energy Assessment	E,F — 25 and 26 January
UNEP/ROA	Expert Group Meeting on the Preparation of the eighth AMCEN session	E,F — 28 and 29 February
UNEP/DEIAEW	GEO Training in Eastern Africa	E,F — 13-17 March
UNEP/DEPI	Thematic Workshop on Abatement of Greenhouse Gas Emissions	E,F — 27 and 28 March
UNEP/Climate Change	Global Solar and Wind Assessment Africa Regional Meeting	E,F — 29 and 30 March
UNEP/ROA	African Regional Meeting on Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Response	E,F — 3-7 April
CITES	African Elephant Range states	E,F — 6 and 7 April
CITES	Eleventh Conference of the Parties to CITES	E,F,S — 10-20 April
UNEP/CBD	Advanced Preparatory Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Biological Diversity Convention	E,F — 11 and 12 May
UNEP/CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity and IUCN meeting on Sharing the Benefits from Biodiversity, Session of the Global Biodiversity Forum	E,F — 12-14 May
UNEP/CBD	Bureaux of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)	E — 14 May
UNEP/CBD	Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Biological Diversity Convention	A,C,E,F,R,S — 15-26 May
UNEP/DEIAEW	GEO-3 Start-up Meeting — Africa Region	E,F — 31 May-2 June

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/GEF	Assessing National Needs of Persistent Toxic Substances — National Experts Meeting	E,F — 31 July-3 August
UNEP/Regional Office for Africa (UNEP/ROA)	GEF/PDFB Regional GEF Workshop for Assessing Management Needs of Persistent Toxic Substances	E,F — 31 July-4 August
UNEP/DEIAEW	Fifteenth Meeting of the International Advisory Committee of the EIS Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa	E,F — 7-11 August
UNEP/DPDL	Climate Change Workshop	E,F — 14-18 August
UNEP/ISES	Utility for Africa Seminar on Rural Electrification in Africa (postponed)	E,F — 11-13 September
UNEP/DEIAEW	Fifteenth Meeting of the International Advisory Committee of the EIS Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa	E,F — 12-16 September
UNAIDS	Great Lakes initiative on AIDS Consultation Meetings	E,F — 23-27 October
UNEP/Division of Policy Development and Law/Legal Economics and Other Instruments (DPDL/LEO)	Meeting of Senior Government Officials in Environmental Law	E,F,S — 23-27 October
UNEP/RONA/WB/ROA	Disaster Management Workshop (postponed)	E,F — 1-3 November

B. Major meetings with interpretation planned and serviced at Nairobi

January to June 2001

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/ROA	African High-Level Regional Meeting on Energy and Sustainable Development	E,F 10-13 January
UNEP/Governing Council secretariat	Informal Consultations for heads of GC Delegation prior to GC-21	A,C,E,F,R,S 4 February
UNEP/GC secretariat	Twenty-first session of the Governing Council of UNEP	A,C,E,F,R,S 5-9 February

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNCHS, Habitat	Eighteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements (CHS-18)	A,C,E,F,R,S 12-16 February
UNCHS, Habitat	Preparatory Committee for Istanbul +5 (second substantive session)	A,C,E,F,R,S 19-23 February
UNEP/CBD	Regional Meeting on Biosafety Clearing House and CHM	E,F 26-28 February
UNEP/GC	Extraordinary meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP	E,F 12 March
UNCHS-Habitat	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS-Habitat	E,F 15 March
UNCHS-Habitat	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS-Habitat	E,F 29 March
UNEP/GC	Seventy-fourth meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP	E,F 30 March
UNNY/DPDL/ROE	United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination	E,F 2-3 April
IPCC secretariat	Seventeenth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Plenary (seventeenth IPCC)	A,C,E,F,R,S 4-6 April
UNICEF/Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (UNICEF-ESARO)	Eastern and Southern Africa Meeting	E,F 18-19 April
UNEP/DEPI/ROA	Second annual meeting of the Network of African Environmental Lawyers	E,F 24-25 April
UNEP/GC	Working Group on International Environmental Governance of the Committee of Permanent Representatives	A,C,E,F,R,S 2 May
UNESCO	International Movement of Catholic Students PAX-ROMANA	E,F 14 May
UNEP/GC	Working Group on International Environmental Governance of Committee on Permanent Representatives to UNEP	A,C,E,F,R,S 18 May
UNCHS-Habitat	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS-Habitat	A,C,E,F,R,S 24 May
UNEP/DEWA/RC	Global Environment Outlook (GEO-3) Regional Consultations for the African Region	E,F 21-23 June

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/DEWA/RC	African Environment Outlook (AEO) Regional Consultations	E,F 25-27 June
UNEP/GC	Seventy-fifth meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP	A,C,E,F,R,S 27 June

Annex II

Meetings without interpretation

January 2000-December 2000

English-only meetings = 483

January 2000-June 2001

English-only meetings = 54

Annex III

Non-calendar meetings

January-December 2000

Committee of Permanent Representatives meetings	-	12
Working group meetings	-	40
Subcommittee meetings	-	17
Extraordinary meetings	-	3
Total		**72**

January-June 2001

Committee of Permanent Representatives meetings	-	5
Working group meetings	-	31
Subcommittee meetings		4
Extraordinary meetings	-	3
Total		**43**

Annex IV

A. Major meetings serviced outside Nairobi

January to December 2000

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/CBD	Informal Consultations on the Biosafety Protocol, First Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Biological Diversity Convention to Adopt the Cartagena Protocol Fifth Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-5), Montreal	A,C,E,F,R,S 20 January-4 February
UNEP/Chemicals	First meeting of the Interim Chemical Review Committee under the Rotterdam Convention, Geneva	E 21-25 February
UNEP/ROA	Meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, Abuja, Nigeria	E,F 4-7 April
UNEP/CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity Article 8J Meeting, Seville, Spain	A,C,E,F,R,S 27-31 March
UNEP/Chemicals	Fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on persistent organic pollutants, Bonn, Germany	A,C,E,F,R,S 20-25 March
UNEP/MLF	Thirty-first session of the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund, Geneva, Switzerland	A,C,E,F,R,S 3-7 July
UNEP/Ozone	First meeting of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, meeting of the Implementation Committee under the Non-compliance Procedure of the Montreal Protocol and meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Montreal Protocol, Geneva, Switzerland	A,C,E,F,R,S 10-13 July
UNE/Division of Environmental Conventions	North East Pacific Action Plan, Panama City, Panama	E,S 5-8 September
UNEP/ROA	Second Expert Group Meeting and Ministerial Segment on the Environment, Senegal	E,F 19-21 October
UNEP/Chemicals	Seventh Meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for the Application of the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, Geneva, Switzerland	A,C,E,F,R,S 30 October-3 November

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/Chemicals	Fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants, Johannesburg, South Africa	A,C,E,F,R,S 4-10 December
UNEP/Multilateral Fund secretariat	Thirty-second session of the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	A,C,E,F,R,S 4-8 December
UNEP/Ozone secretariat	Twelfth meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	A,C,E,F,R,S 11-14 December

B. Major meetings serviced outside Nairobi

January to June 2001

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) duration*
UNEP/Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat (UNEP/CBD)	Sixth Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice Meeting (SBSTTA-6), Montreal, Canada	A,C,E,F,R,S 12-16 March
UNEP/CBD	Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing, Montreal, Canada	E,S,F 19-22 March
UNEP/Chemicals	Second meeting of the Interim Chemical Review Committee to the Rotterdam Convention (2-ICRC), Rome, Italy	E Only 19-23 March
UNEP/DEC	Second session of High-Level Government Designated Expert Meeting for the Proposed Northeast Pacific Regional Seas Programme, Nicaragua	E,S 19-23 March
UNEP/Chemicals	Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Adoption and Signing of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Stockholm, Sweden	A,C,E,F,R,S 21-23 May

C. Major meetings planned with interpretation to be serviced by the United Nations Office at Nairobi, outside Nairobi

July 2001-December 2001

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNEP/Chemicals	Eighth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for the Application of the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (INC/PIC-8), Rome, Italy	A,C,E,F,R,S 8-12 October
UNEP/Ozone	Second meeting of the Bureau of the Twelfth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, Twenty-sixth Implementation Committee under the Non-Compliance of the Montreal Protocol and the Thirteenth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, Colombo, Sri Lanka	A,C,E,F,R,S 15-19 October
UNEP/Chemicals	Sixth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (INC/POPs-6), Geneva [to be decided]	A,C,E F,R,S November [Dates to be decided]
UNEP/Multilateral Fund	Thirty-fifth meeting of the Executive Committee to the Multilateral Fund [Venue to be decided]	C,E,F,S November [Dates to be decided]
UNEP/CBD	Seventh Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technology and Technological Advice (7-SBSTTA), Montreal, Canada	A,C,E,F,R,S 12-16 November
UNEP/CBD	Open-ended Intersessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, Montreal, Canada	A,C,E,F,R,S 19-21 November
UNEP/GPA	First Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Forum of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, Montreal, Canada	A,C,E,F,R,S 19-23 November

D. Major meetings with interpretation to be serviced by the United Nations Office at Nairobi, in Nairobi

July 2001-December 2001

Organization	*Title of meeting*	*Language(s) and duration*
UNCHS (Habitat)	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S 19 July
UNCHS (Habitat)	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S 6 September
UNEP/GC Secretariat	Seventy-sixth meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S 19 September
UNEP/CBD	Open-ended Meeting of Experts on Compliance, Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S 26-28 September
UNEP/CBD	Second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP-2), Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S 1-5 October
UNCHS (Habitat)	International Conference on Spatial Land Information System in Support of Secure Tenure	E,F 2-5 October
UNEP/GEF	Africa GIS 2001	E,F 5-9 October
UNEP/DEPI	First Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts to Review Draft Guidelines on Compliance and Enforcement of MEAs	E,F,S 22-26 October
UNCHS (Habitat)	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNCHS (Habitat), Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S
UNEP/GC Secretariat	Seventy-seventh meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP, Nairobi	A,C,E,F,R,S 10 December

Annex V

Regional groups

	Interpretation services			*Conference facilities*	
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Requested*	*Provided*
July 2000-June 2001	10	10		152	152
July 1999-June 2000	NONE	NONE		63	63
July 1998-June 1999	NONE	NONE		108	108
Breakdown by regional group, July 2000-June 2001, Nairobi					
Group of 77 and China Group	-	-	21	21	21
European Union Coordination Group	-	-	28	28	28
East European Group	-	-	1	1	1
JUSSCANZ (Japan, United States, Canada and New Zealand)	-	-	8	8	8
Western European and Other States Group	-	-	19	19	19
European Commission	-	-	1	1	1
African Group	-	-	16	16	16
Arab Group	-	-	16	16	16
Latin American and Caribbean Group	-	-	16	16	16
Central and Eastern European Group	-	-	16	16	16
Asian Group	-	-	10	10	10

NB: During the reporting period July 1998-June 1999 and July 1999-June 2000, interpretation was not requested as it was not available.